DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 454 585 EA 031 056

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TITLE The Seduction of the Subject/Citizen: Governmentality and School Governance Policy.

PUB DATE 2001-04-00

NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Seattle, WA, April 10-14, 2001).

PUB TYPE Speeches/Meeting Papers (150) -- Translations (170)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS *Academic Discourse; *Citizen Participation; Discourse Communities; Educational Change; *Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; *Policy Analysis; *Power Structure; *Social Control; Social Reinforcement; Social Structure

IDENTIFIERS American Educational Research Association; *Foucault (Michel); Ontario; *Ontario Department of Education (Canada)

ABSTRACT

Traditional educational policy analysis is typically evaluative, focusing on degrees of success or failure, often obscuring how particular forms of knowledge and power reproduce social inequity. A Foucauldian, postmodern framework is particularly appropriate for analyzing educational policy because, in part, the Foucauldian concepts of "discipline," "power," "the subject," and "governmentality" can reveal how significant policy problems related to social inequity are embedded in the discourses of democratization and of responsibility and accountability. Several texts were analyzed, including policy documents and other materials available on the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training Web site. As in other places, Ontario's new reforms reflect a fixation on reforming schools to improve economic competitiveness. Key findings from this investigation include the observation that reforms intended to empower all educational stakeholders are limited by a larger political and economic context. As in other Western nations, the devolution of authority implied by Ontario's reforms, designed to invest all stakeholders in carrying out successful reforms tailored to local realities, is fundamentally limited by the continuing realities of centralized control of funding and accountability processes. The populist-sounding discourse of devolution, decentralization, and participation work to align the self-regulating subject/citizen to the desires of the state in ways that undermine social equity. Further research is needed to assess how the discourses embedded in policy documents are perceived, used, and resisted by local school council members. (Contains 46 references.) (TEJ)

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ED 454 585

The Seduction of the Subject/Citizen: Governmentality and School Governance Policy

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Paper presented at the Foucault and Education Special Interest Group
"Re-examining What We Know and the Knowing Subject" Session
2001 Annual Meeting of the American Education Research Association
Seattle, Washington
April 2001

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The Seduction of the Subject/Citizen: Governmentality and School Governance Policy

Purposes

This paper reflects my interest in equity issues in education and focuses on recent 'imposed' provincial reform legislation and on the knowledges and practices that have become privileged in the name of educational policy. Specifically, I am concerned with how particular forms of knowledge are produced and reproduced through texts such as government policy documents, and how these forms become taken for granted and dominant – the rationalities of power and the reinforcements of social inequity. In this paper I employ Foucauldian poststructuralism as a theoretical approach to analyze recent educational policies regarding decentralized arrangements for public school governance. As such, the purpose of the paper is twofold: Firstly, I argue that the theoretical constructs of Foucault's work and the work of others who have followed provide a framework particularly appropriate for education policy analysis. Secondly, I focus on the text of a particular set of reform documents – the policies involving school council initiatives in two Canadian provinces – to illustrate how the Foucauldian notion of 'archaeology' and the constructs of 'discipline', 'power', 'the subject', and 'governmentality' are helpful in revealing how significant policy 'problems' related to social inequity are embedded in the discourses of 'democratization' and of 'responsibility and accountability' and are operationalized in the 'democratization' and 'technologization' of discourse.

Context and Background

The policies I examine in this paper have been initiated as a direct result of recent reform legislation for 'decentralization' in education in the provinces of Ontario and Alberta, and outline governance mandates for school councils and shared decision-making at the school level (Alberta Education, 1994a; Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1995). The background of such policies is important to note. To begin, these policies reflect a significant shift in the political ideology of many Western industrialized nations for which competing in a global economy has become increasingly challenging in the past two decades. In this context, and based on the argument that there is a direct relationship between education and the economy, public schools have become more and more accountable for student performance and 'quality' education (Marginson, 1993). In addition, in times of difficult economic circumstances, educational budgets and programs have been cut and schools have been required to operate with greater fiscal responsibility. Beginning in the 1980s and 1990s and continuing into the new century, the desire for efficiency, effectiveness and, moreover, accountability has resulted in significant public education restructuring and reform. One of the most prevalent of these changes can be seen in the trend to decentralize school management and administration from the 'centre' to the 'work face', resulting in the 'site-based' or 'self-managed' school (Whitty, Power, & Halpin, 1998). Key to this 'restructuring for accountability' in Ontario and Alberta is the aim to strengthen connections between schools and the community via shared decision-making models and the organization of school councils for the inclusion of all 'stakeholder' groups – parents, students, community members, teachers, and administrators – in the governance of individual schools (Alberta Education, 1994a; Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1995).

Traditionally, the analysis of educational policies, such as those related to school councils, has often been evaluative, focusing on degrees of success or failure. However, some scholars (e.g., Miller & Rose, 1993; Peters & Marshall, 1996; Scheurich, 1994) criticize these conventional approaches. They suggest that evaluative methods assume a linear evolution of process in educational reform, where continued problem-solving and adjustment will eventually result in some kind of policy ideal. They argue that such approaches gloss over significant issues of how power operates within social relations and do little in the way of shedding light on *how* policy problems

become conceived and articulated or in illuminating the deep structures of meaning which underlie policy tactics and strategies. For an alternative approach to policy analysis, authors such as Ball (1994), Miller and Rose (1993), and Scheurich (1994) have looked to poststructuralism. They argue that words and their meanings are socially constructed; they are interested in how language – its practices, formations and 'events' – constitutes discourses which, over time and under particular conditions, come to be 'dominant' in their 'taken-for-grantedness' and their wide acceptance as the unchallenged 'truth'. Focusing specifically on educational politics, and therefore concerned with how power and, potentially, inequity are constituted through discourse within relationships or arrangements of governance, these authors have drawn primarily on the work of Michel Foucault. For the purposes of this paper, I am interested in the type of poststructuralism utilized by several authors (e.g., Ball, 1994; Marshall, 1990; Scheurich, 1994) that focuses on Foucault's work as it applies to policy analysis. As such, I refer to this theory as 'Foucauldian' poststructuralism.

Theoretical Framework: Foucauldian Poststructuralism for Policy Analysis

Although poststructuralist theory is extremely complex, the following section is intended to outline three aspects of Foucault's work that are regarded by poststructuralist policy analysts as particularly important. The first involves looking at policy analysis as a "critical problematic" (Scheurich, 1994, p. 297). The second involves a consideration of concepts key to Foucauldian poststructuralism: discipline, power, and the subject. The third focuses on an additional key concept – governmentality – of particular interest to those who use a poststructuralist theoretical approach to policy analysis.

Policy as a Critical Problematic

First, poststructuralist policy analysts argue for a reconceptualization of policy analysis as a 'critical problematic', for the examination of the social construction of policy problems in a way that makes visible the assumptions underpinning the policies. In this sense, an analysis of policy becomes an investigation of the policy itself. It is the policy that is problematized and continually open to reinterpretation; it is seen as shifting and not fixed. It becomes the *focus* of the interrogation as opposed to the *starting point* from which an evaluation or debate of a supposedly neutral nature occurs as a means to a supposedly objective solution.

Concerned with social control and moral regulation, Foucault saw the institutions of modern society as existing through mechanisms of power and domination and, as such, in need of interrogation – their technologies to be questioned, their arrangements to be interrupted. In this way, Foucault's (1972, 1990, 1995) work challenges us to undermine modernist ways of understanding the emergence of our institutions in terms of causality or in terms of a linear or continuous progression. It asks us to see history as shifting and fragmented, and to search for incoherence in events, and for inconsistencies, errors, and omissions. Specifically, then, in terms of poststructuralist policy analysis, Foucault's approach necessitates that we 'dig' deeper, that we look *into* the policy rather than *outside* or *beyond* the policy. In this way, we examine the assumptions, conditions and forces which make possible the emergence of a social problem, and we conceive of, articulate, and deal with research problems in ways that problematize the forms, organizations, and technologies of modern institutions (Scheurich, 1994). Referred to by Foucault (1972) as 'archaeology', this approach requires that we ask the 'how' questions: How is it that this came to be said or that this has come to be accepted and taken for granted as 'right' or as 'truth'? Under what conditions or circumstances has this become possible? Using such questions to guide an inquiry allows a 'micro' look into details – the specifics of the organization, technologies, rationalities – of institutions, such as the State and the school, and their policies. Moreover, such questions offer a framework particularly useful in examining how power operates through policies, themselves sophisticated institutional mechanisms or 'knowledges' (Marshall, 1990).

Discipline, Power, and the Subject

Second, in analyzing policy as a 'critical problematic', particular attention must be paid to some key concepts essential to Foucauldian poststructuralist theory: discipline, power, and the subject. To begin, Foucault (1995) argued that new configurations of knowledge, specifically the detailed understandings of the human body as 'object' and the development of sites such as the asylums, clinics, and hospitals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, resulted in a significant shift in the way power was exercised. Using examples of the 'disciplinary' institutions of the military, the prison, the school, and the factory, Foucault identified the practices of prohibition, obligation, discipline, and training, as well as the reorganization or configuration of time and space for control and regulation over the activities of individuals, as the techniques of a new 'gentle' or subtle form of force or coercion: According to Foucault, it was through such disciplines that individuals, 'docile' subjects, came to learn new behaviours and attitudes and to acquire new skills. Indeed, new kinds of human 'subjects' were produced. The widespread adaptation and application – the "swarming" (1995, p. 211) – of practices of discipline and surveillance, in addition to mechanisms for disclosure and documentation, made the activities of individuals both known and knowable. For example, technologies such as the collection and compilation of statistics enabled the regulatory and controlling functions of societal institutions. In this way, power came to be exercised through the discipline of the new 'disciplines' and the respective forms of knowledge they produced as 'truth'.

Understanding the subject within this power/knowledge dynamic requires a close look at Foucault's (1982, 1990) ideas about power – as existing not in external "superstructural positions" (1990, p. 94), but rather as operating internally and pervasively, within a kind of 'force field' or web wherein disequilibrium in relationships allows power to circulate, to shift, or to be exercised. Foucault used the word "conduct" to explain how power behaves "within a more or less open field of possibilities" (1982, pp. 220-221). This description suggests that power exists and travels as electricity does, within a network of innumerable relationship points. As subjects within the network, individuals do not acquire or possess power; they are merely the vehicles of power (p. 101). Power is dynamic; it is conducted and exercised *through* the practices, tactics, or techniques of the "machinery of production" (1990, p. 94) of institutions, without being located *in* these sites. Not to be seen as necessarily or only operating as a result of intention or choice; power is to be understood as moving and shifting with imbalance, inequality, or division.

Although Foucault introduced the subject as 'disciplined' and 'normalized', he also viewed the subject as a participant in power relations. According to Foucault (1995), discipline and its 'disciplines' form objectified configurations of knowledge that are produced and reproduced in language and practice – in 'discourse'. Foucault (1972) defines discourse as groups of statements that appear across a range of texts and in a variety of sites and make available a way of talking about or representing knowledge (Foucault, 1972). As discourses emerge as 'truth', they become dominant and, moreover, taken-for-granted. They constitute not only certain 'subjects' (i.e., the autonomous, responsible subject/citizen), but also certain 'subject positions' within which subjects locate themselves so as to make the most sense of the knowledges of the discourse. As such, the subject is not only subjected *to* but is also *subjecting* to the meaning, the regulation and, moreover, the power of the discourse (Hall, 1997). However, the subject must also be understood as 'agent', an actor or participant within power relations. In this regard, Walkerdine's (1990) explanation of the subject as multiple, contradictory – not unitary – is helpful. Through discourse, certain practices, techniques, or modes of power can operate *on* or can be operated *by* the subject. Key here is the individual's ability to 'take up' or to negotiate among the multiple and complex, often "impossible array" (p. 47) of contradictory subject positions in order to establish or assume a position of advantage within social dynamics.

Authors such as Gordon (1991), Hunter (1996), Miller and Rose (1993), Popkewitz (1998), and Rose (1996) have built on Foucault's work, discussing further the emergence of the reflective, self-regulating subject – the responsible citizen – within the context of the development of advanced

liberal democracies. They locate this 'subject/citizen' as a participant, inextricably linked to State institutions. As Rose (1996) suggests, it was through the sixteenth to eighteenth century preoccupations with the 'disciplined' subject and 'disciplined' populations that liberal understandings of rule emerged, "dependent upon ways of rendering intelligible and practicable ... the production and government of a polity of free citizens" (p. 44). The 'free' and 'civilized' citizens were the subjects of the technologies, observations, and interventions of state bureaucracies and the practices and examinations of disciplinary institutions, such as those of the school, the clinic, and the military, which produced the "subjective conditions, the forms of self-mastery, self-regulation and self-control, necessary to govern a nation" (p. 44). As such, rather than asserting power *over* the population, the State became concerned with control *through* an autonomous subject who was free from external forms of enforcement or policing.

In addition to acknowledging the administrative imperatives of the State and the disciplinary practices of the institution, Hunter (1996) and Popkewitz (1998) also focus on the influence of the spiritual discipline and pastoral guidance of Christian pedagogy in the emergence of the state school. They further the analysis of the subject/citizen not only as self-regulating and self-concerned, but also as morally and ethically self-directed. Popkewitz (1998) suggests that practices of disclosure through, for example, the Catholic confession, became the method for the production of "personal self-reflection and the inner, self-guided moral development of the individual" (p. 24). In addition, pastoral-disciplinary pedagogy required that individuals do "ethical work" including, first, the initiation into practices of "self-problematization .... for taking an interest in [them]selves as the subjects of [their] conduct" and, second, the participation in the "'work of the self on the self' .... disciplining and comporting themselves as the responsible agents of their own personhood" (Hunter, 1996, p. 158). Through this "cultural labour" the individual is "subjectified", taking on the attitudes and behaviors necessary and desirable in the reflective and self-regulating, responsible and autonomous subject/citizen (p. 158).

Governmentality

Third, a poststructuralist theoretical approach, particularly as it applies to policy analysis, requires a consideration of Foucault's (1991) conception of governmentality. According to Foucault, within the State and the educational organizations of the State, power/knowledge operates to shape, reinforce, and constitute a myriad of taken-for-granted practices, arrangements, and structures that serve as the conduits – the techniques, apparatuses, and tactics – of government. With this conception of power/knowledge, the State is, in itself, not some monolithic power source; rather, power operates through its discursive character – its language. Following Foucault, Miller and Rose (1993) argue that a conception of language must go beyond a simplistic understanding, to encompass a wider discursive field of political rationalities – the 'means' of government. They propose that language be viewed as an "intellectual technology" (p. 80), including an array of activities such as writing, listing, numbering and computing that "render a realm into discourse as a knowable, calculable and administrable object" (p. 79). According to Miller and Rose, it is through these intellectual technologies, these procedures of inscription, these means of 'knowing', that the "diverse domains of 'governmentality' are made up, the 'objects' such as the economy, the enterprise, the social field and the family are rendered in a particular conceptual form and made amenable to intervention and regulation" (p. 79). In this way, governmentality, particularly within the context of advanced liberal democracies, works via discourse and discursive practices, through a myriad of rationalities, from afar, upon subjects who, as self-regulating and autonomous agents, are 'positioned' to be governed in a variety of ways. It allows, to use Ball's (1994) term, 'steering at a distance' or, to use Miller and Rose's (1993) term, 'government at a distance'.

Data Sources and Method of Analysis

The data of my study are the policy documents – the guidelines and procedures for school councils in Ontario and Alberta – and the materials related to the introduction and implementation of these policies, including government press releases and information bulletins. For the most part, I have accessed these documents via the Alberta Learning and the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training websites. As outlined above, the 'how' questions of a Foucauldian poststructuralist approach – the questions key to problematizing the policy – loosely frame my inquiry: How is it that the participation of education 'stakeholders' has become important enough to require that representation of all school community members is legislated in policies for school councils? Under what circumstances or conditions do policies for school councils become promoted and accepted? In addition, since my analysis focuses specifically on the notion of 'governmentality' and the related concepts of 'discipline', 'power' and 'the subject', these key questions and constructs serve as a *theoretical lens* through which to examine recent school governance policy as a 'critical problematic'.

However, in order to examine specific policy texts with particular attention to language and discursive devices, a *method* of analysis is required. As outlined above, Foucault's conceptions of discipline, power, and the subject – especially in terms of governmentality – provide an important theoretical frame for a poststructuralist approach to policy analysis. However, according to Fairclough (1992), as valuable as Foucault's work has been in the development of social theory, it remains somewhat abstract and, with the exception of the guidelines of his 'archaeological' approach which are general to his interest in the human sciences, his method of analysis is, for the most part, developed implicitly throughout his work and is backgrounded by the weight of his arguments. In addition, Foucault was not primarily concerned with the discourse of specific texts, nor did he devote much attention to the particulars of written or spoken language. And so, interested in applying Foucualt's ideas about discourse, power, and the construction of knowledge and of the subject to a concrete and practical application for analysing actual texts, Fairclough combines Foucault's conceptions of the social with the some of the more 'practical' principles of critical linguistics to develop a *method*, an approach he refers to as 'textually-oriented discourse analysis'.

For the purposes of this paper, then, I use Fairclough's (1992) method to analyze school council policy documents. I focus, as Fairclough (1992) does, on the idea that text is not only a discursive event, but is also an event of social practice. Moreover, I take Fairclough's position of a 'constructive' or 'constitutive' theory of discourse; it is through the production and interpretation of text that subjectivity is shaped and that social identity is constructed. Fairclough stresses the importance of the identify function of language: "The ways in which societies categorize and build identities for their members is a fundamental aspect of how they work, how power relations are imposed and exercised, how societies are reproduced and change" (p. 168).

Similar to Miller and Rose (1993) and Rose (1996), Fairclough (1992) makes the link between Foucault's understanding of 'the subject' and 'governmentality' and the importance of text in the social constitution of subjectivity and of 'selfhood' by discourse (p. 219). Echoing the arguments of Miller and Rose presented earlier in this paper, Fairclough refers to the 'self-steering self', the individual positioned by discursive tendencies to act as a responsible and autonomous 'subject/citizen'. Here, through his approach to 'textually-oriented discourse analysis', Fairclough points directly to text as the mediator of knowledge. He pays specific attention to some concrete ways in which written documents work discursively, through features such as the 'democratization' and the 'technologization' of discourse and the through discourses of 'democratization' and of 'responsibility and accountability', to illuminate how governmentality operates to constitute and (re)produce the 'subject/citizen'.

Accordingly, I follow through with this inquiry in a particular manner. To begin, rather than attempting a comprehensive analysis of the entire corpus related to school council policies in Alberta and Ontario, I review the documents with attention to problematizing the policy itself,

keeping in mind poststructuralist *theoretical* considerations of 'discipline' and 'power' as they relate to the more specific concepts of 'governmentality' and the 'subject/citizen'. As a second step, I follow Fairclough's (1992) *methodological* recommendation to consider text interpretation on two levels:

> One level is a matter of trying to make sense of the features of texts by seeing them as elements in discourse practice, in particular as 'traces' of the processes of text production...and as 'cues' in the processes of text interpretation.... The other level of interpretation is a matter of trying to make sense of the features of texts and of one's interpretation of how they are produced and interpreted, by seeing both as embedded within a wider social practice. (p. 198)

Fairclough also argues that texts are to be seen as contradictory, ambivalent, and unstable. As such, I am interested in an analysis 'across' texts; I look for general tendencies and similarities. I identify these elements by providing specific examples from the documents to illustrate what, I argue, emerge as policy 'problems'.

Analysis

To begin my analysis, a closer look at the poststructuralist concept of power is necessary. Government at a distance requires that power is understood as operating through technologies within a network or, as Ball (1994) and Miller and Rose (1993) suggest, in terms of a 'microphysics' – "the complex of relays and interdependencies which enable programmes of government to act upon and intervene upon those places, persons and populations which are their concern" (Miller & Rose, p. 82). As such, we must be prepared to investigate not only the "apparently humble and mundane mechanisms which appear to make it possible to govern: techniques of notation, computation and calculation; procedures of examination and assessment," but we must also look closely at "professional specialisms and vocabularies" (p. 82), the technologies of intervention. Intervention, key to government at a distance, is the means by which "authorities of various sorts have sought to shape, normalize and instrumentalize the conduct, thought, decisions and aspirations of others in order to achieve the objectives they consider desirable" (p. 82).

In discussing intervention, Miller and Rose (1993) draw our attention once more to the discursive power of language in governmentality, and to its key role in "establishing these loosely aligned networks, and in enabling rule to be brought about in an indirect manner" (p. 84). Very significant to my interest in decentralization and my analysis of school council policies is the following statement:

> It is, in part, through adopting shared vocabularies, theories and explanations, that loose and flexible associations may be established between agents across time and space – Departments of State, pressure groups, academics, managers, teachers, employees, parents – whilst each remains, to a greater or lesser extent, constitutionally distinct and formally independent. Each of these diverse forces can be enrolled in a governmental network to the extent that it can translate the objectives and values of others into its own terms, to the extent that the arguments of another become consonant with and provide norms for its own ambitions and actions. (Miller & Rose, 1993, p. 84)

Language, specifically the language of expertise, enables intervention for government at a distance. Its appeal to norms and values offers a claim to truth that is both compelling and seductive. It offers promise, a means to a desirable outcome that will be shared and enjoyed by all. "Hence expertise can appeal ... to the ambitions of politicians, administrators, educators and others seeking to achieve particular objectives in the most efficacious manner" (p. 84).

<u>The Democratization of Discourse and the Discourse of Democratization</u>

What Miller and Rose (1993) identify above, in terms of intervention for government at a distance, is affirmed in what Fairclough (1992) explains as the trend towards the 'democratization' of discourse. Fairclough defines this tendency as "the removal of inequalities and asymmetries in

the discursive and linguistic rights, obligations and prestige of groups of people" (p. 201). He suggests that democratization in discourse, "like democratization more generally, has been a major parameter of change in recent decades, but in both cases the process has been very uneven … and in both cases there are questions about how real or how cosmetic changes have been" (p. 201). More specifically, Fairclough employs his method of 'textually-oriented discourse analysis' to particular documents to identify democratization of discourse and of discourse practices in "a tendency towards informality of language" and in the "elimination of overt power markers in institutional discourse types with unequal power relations" (p. 201). Apparent in the discourse of the policy texts of school council legislation in Ontario and Alberta, these tendencies are revealed in a number of ways.

To begin, what is most obvious and yet perhaps most compelling in a 'textually-oriented analysis' of discourse and discourse practices of recent government documents pertaining to school councils can be expressed in two words: availability and accessibility. Legislation, appearing in the form of original policy memoranda; background information, outlining origin and impetus of such policies; handbooks and guidelines, offering specific instructions and procedures for implementing policy; bulletins and newsletters, providing updated information on the progress of policy realization; and evaluations, reporting on policy success and offering recommendations for further reform, are not only readily available from the Ontario and Alberta Governments via the internet, they are also easy to access. Websites are 'user friendly', including clear links to Ministry resources and publications and the capacity to search within the site; documents are easy to read and are designed to be downloaded and reproduced, some even offer the option of reformatting to a version most suitable for printing. This is not surprising considering global trends in information technology which have been driven by arguments that access to information is a key to the democratization of knowledge (e.g., Giddens, 1998), and considering the compliance of both federal and provincial governments not only to freedom of access to information legislation but also to 'plain language' policy for legal and official documentation. Such moves are intended to increase 'readership', to appeal to large and diverse audiences by pulling away the mystique of unavailability and inaccessibility that has traditionally veiled the workings of State institutions.

In terms of Fairclough's (1992) notion of the 'democratization' of discourse, this trend allows the common person access to what has previously been the domain of the State; the power markers between the 'expert' gatekeepers and the public have, to a great degree, been removed. Through the discourse practices made possible by information technology, the democratization of discourse specific to government legislation, such as the policies concerning school councils, is achieved. More specifically, 'expert' information is widely disseminated and authority becomes shared. For example, early documentation concerning Ontario's original school council policy, including the background information attached to the original *Policy/Program Memorandum No. 122* (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1995), repeatedly cites a recent Royal Commission on Learning as having recommended that all schools be required to establish school council advisory committees for the purpose of increasing communication between schools and their communities. In Alberta, this move to shared expertise is also evident. For example, the original policy text for school council regulation (Alberta Education, 1994a) was ushered in alongside *Roles and Responsibilities in Education: A Position Paper* (Alberta Education, 1994b). This paper includes a myriad of references to research which supports claims to the importance of parental and community participation in education. In both cases, the intended audience is the general public and the information is meant for broad readership. Hence, the discourse of these documents is highly 'democratized' and, moreover, the 'expert' information handed over to the people is meant to establish an 'expert' public. Not only is the information shared, it is assumed that the information will be agreed upon and, then, held in common.

This democratization of discourse, wherein the 'lay person' becomes the 'expert' through availability and accessibility to information, constitutes what Miller and Rose (1993) refer to as a

'language of expertise' – a language of promise, increasingly common to all which, most importantly, carries with it a vocabulary of shared values and goals. This language of expertise is exemplified in both the Ontario and Alberta cases, where there is a strong and repeated assertion that the original motivation for school council legislation is in response to public demand. This claim to 'grassroots' pressure is not only affirmed by the research cited by policy-makers in support of such demands but, more importantly, it is also in sync with what is argued to be the expectation of the public. This is particularly evident in the text associated with Alberta's school council legislation, and is exemplified in a press release of past Education Minister Halvar Jonson:

> We listened carefully to Albertans' comments on school councils and we've responded. Bill 37 has been proclaimed and school council regulations are now in place. Parents will continue to be heard, and we'll work together providing the best possible education of all Alberta students. (Alberta Learning, June 5, 1995)

With particular attention to the role of parents, the words of current Ontario Minister of Education, Janet Ecker, echo this sentiment:

> It is clear from the findings of the Education Improvement Commission, and recent consultations with hundreds of parent representatives of school councils, that parents want their voices heard. School councils are an excellent way to do that. These initiatives will ensure that parents can participate. (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, June 30, 2000)

Parallel to this focus on a response to public pressure, within the school council texts of both Ontario and Alberta is also a pledge to ensure that the implementation and evaluation of the policies will continue to be a consultative process (e.g., Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, February 10, 1995, June 30, 2000; Alberta Education, 1994b, Alberta Learning, 1999).

Not only do we see, in Fairclough's (1992) terms, the *democratization of discourse* in school council texts in, for example, the use of informal or plain language, and the *democratization of discursive practices* in, for example, the trend towards availability and accessibility to information, we can also switch the words of Fairclough's terms to label what can be seen as an emerging *discourse of democratization*. A 'language of public involvement' dominates individual documents and cuts across the body of texts regarding school council policy of both Ontario and Alberta. Parents and community members are to have 'voice' and 'greater influence', to offer 'feedback' and 'input', and to assume an 'active' and 'vital role' for 'meaningful involvement'. Key terms such as 'partnership', 'strengthened relationships', 'increased communication', 'shared ideas', 'shared information', 'shared responsibility', and the 'spirit of cooperation' introduce a vocabulary of community participation obviously essential to the implementation of new school council policy. Of the many policy documents concerning school councils, one has only to look to Ontario's *Policy/Program Memorandum No. 122* (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1995) and at Alberta's *Roles and Responsibilities in Education: A Position Paper* (Alberta Education, 1994b) for numerous examples of this discourse of democratization.

To go back to Miller and Rose's (1993) notion of a 'language of expertise', in this case the now common language – the vocabulary of shared responsibility, participation, and cooperation – of the State *and* the new 'expert' public, we can see how the democratization of discourse and the discourse of democratization work in tandem to blur institutional boundaries and to eliminate traditional power markers between the State and the public. However, as Miller and Rose also remind us, it is through the language of expertise that 'intervention' for 'government at a distance' is enabled. As outlined above, the draw and appeal of school council texts is evident in their democratized forms; in the first instance, in the availability and accessibility of policy documents and, in the second, in the language of cooperation and involvement for the participation of all 'stakeholders' in the governance and decision-making of education. Indeed, who would argue that all interested parties should not have a say in the concerns of the local public school? Hence, the goals of the public become nicely aligned with the aims of the State.

This alignment can be understood in terms of the Foucauldian poststructuralist notion of power. In the case of school council policy, shared goals and aims can be said to reflect a balance of power between the State and the public. No longer are the policymakers of the State the sole powerbrokers of education; the Ministry now shares expertise and authority with the public. Again, it is difficult to argue with this assertion, so fundamental to the operation of schools that it is constituted in legislation. Indeed, the democratization of discourse and the discourse of democratization operate to ensure that the involvement of all stakeholders, including parents and community members, is clearly understood as a *right*. Yet, another look at the policy texts reveals that, along with this focus on *rights*, there is also a strong focus on *responsibilities*. With allowances for an 'active' role, it seems clear that educational partners must be prepared to follow through with actual participation. This is not surprising; to expect anything different would be unusual given the assumptions of our society's liberal democratic tradition that see rights and responsibilities as inextricably linked. However, a poststructuralist approach to policy analysis requires that such assumptions be problematized. As such, a further examination of the policy texts is necessary, with a view to understanding how the concept of responsibility comes into play, particularly in terms of shared goals and aims and the power relations imbued in this alignment.

The Discourses of Responsibility and Accountability

The discourse of original school council policy texts of both Alberta and Ontario illustrates the focus not only on rights, evident in terms of democratization, but also on responsibilities. In this respect, the words of Alberta's past Minister of Education, Halvor Jonson, are noteworthy:

> All members of society have a responsibility to contribute to the education of young people, and an important role to play in education. This document emphasizes just how much our various roles and responsibilities are interrelated. By clarifying our roles and responsibilities we can strengthen relationships and consequently improve the quality of education and establish a more accountable education system. (Alberta Education, 1994b)

The background information accompanying Ontario's *Policy/Program Memorandum No. 122* carries with it the same message:

> The government recognizes that the education of Ontario's young people is a shared responsibility involving schools, students and their families, and members of the community. Parents and guardians have the right, as well as the responsibility, to participate in the education of their children, and can contribute to their children's development in a wide variety of ways. Other members of the community, including members of health, social service, and recreational agencies, also offer a wealth of experience and expertise that may be of benefit to students. Students themselves may have some excellent suggestions pertaining to their education. Members of all of these groups should, therefore, have the opportunity to advise in educational matters. (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1995)

In both of the above passages, the discourse of democratization – the language of public involvement and partnership – is clearly to be understood in terms of responsibility and, specifically, in terms of active participation. The following phrases are indicative of this: 'all members of society', 'responsibility to participate', 'important role to play,' 'responsibility to contribute' 'experience and expertise', 'opportunity to advise'. More important to note, however, is that in both the Ontario and Alberta cases, the understanding of responsibility is directly linked to improving the quality of education for the benefit of students. Here, the alignment of aims common to the State and the public in the desire for stakeholder involvement and partnership takes on an added dimension as these aims now involve the larger goals of 'quality' education.

Furthermore, according to the Alberta example, "by clarifying our roles and responsibilities we can strengthen relationships and consequently improve the quality of education and establish a more accountable education system" (Alberta Education, 1994b). Ontario's *The Road Ahead III: A Report on the Role of School Councils* also includes this message: "Because the focus of education

reform is to improve programmes and increase accountability for student achievement, we believe that the fundamental purpose of school councils is to improve student learning" (Education Improvement Commission, Government of Ontario, 1998b). As does the words of Ontario's past Minister, David Johnson:

> Today, we are approaching an important milestone in Ontario's plan to improve the quality, accountability and effectiveness of our education system. School councils are now up and running in almost every school in the province .... I believe firmly that parents and community members play a vital role in education. They bring fresh ideas, an understanding of community priorities and, above all, a deep commitment to ensuring students' needs are met. (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, Spring/Summer, 1998)

The language of responsibility takes an interesting turn, becoming closely linked with accountability. And, in the following passage, it is as if even the concepts of 'right' and 'responsibility' have become blurred and somehow synonymous:

> "Parents have a right to be involved in the decisions that affect their children's education," said [past Premier] Rae, "and the education system as a whole will benefit from their input. I see this as a positive step towards making our school system more accountable." (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, February 10, 1995)

Here, parental rights are synonymous with parental input (responsibility?), and parental input is understood as contributing directly to school system accountability. Even though the logic of such an argument is suspect, what is more important to this analysis is the way in which language, which has the potential to carry with it significance in meaning, gets somehow reorganized or ameliorated so as to suit the rhetorical purposes of, for example, politicians who support particular policies.

As we have seen, there is no doubt that the discourses and discourse practices associated with school council texts are highly democratized; all educational partners have input in policy decisions, access to policy documents, involvement in policy implementation, and participation in policy process. Moreover, we can agree that the aims and ideals imbued in such democratization are desirable and, indeed, shared: All community members ought to be involved in the governance and decisions of public schools. Furthermore, this democratization offers promise and hope in school council legislation, a solution to problems presently plaguing public schools in recent times of turbulence and reform.

So, in Miller and Rose's (1993) terms, the aims and goals of the public are, indeed, aligned with those of the State. However, what is problematic in this alignment is revealed below the surface of the seemingly desirable 'democratized' discourses and discourse practices. As is argued above, it is apparent that the 'language of involvement' is also the language of rights and then, not surprisingly, the language of responsibility. *But*, it also apparent that that the language of responsibility is, in addition, the language of quality education and, more importantly, the language of *accountability* for quality education. A shift has occurred. Whereas previously the responsibility for public education was largely the jurisdiction of the State and not directly in the hands of individuals, this responsibility is now to be shared via the decentralized arrangements for school governance, such as school councils. Furthermore, whereas previously the responsibility of individual parents was to their own children, this responsibility now extends to the education of *all* children. In addition, this education is to be *quality* education for which parents, along with other stakeholder groups, are to be accountable.

Several analysts (e.g., Ball, 1994; Whitty et al., 1998) offer important criticisms of the recent reform trends of decentralization and devolution, outlining the many problems associated with the shift in responsibility for public education from a central authority to the local level, to those in schools and to parents and community members. My analysis follows the concerns of these critics, with specific attention to the how the discourses of the policy texts relating to school council legislation have served, as Miller and Rose (1993) would say, to 'intervene' through 'governmentality' or, more specifically, through 'government at a distance'. As such, I turn my

attention to the specific ways in which the language of involvement and participation sets the stage for the emergence of a particular discursive form, a style of text that is the result of the new necessity of all educational stakeholders to be responsible and accountable. In this sense, discourse is not only a matter of vocabulary, it is also a matter of what Fairclough (1992) calls 'genre', orders or arrangements of discourse particular to certain practices or disciplines. I argue that the style or genre emerging in the documentation of school council policy is one that is indicative of the discipline of education or of training. I also argue that this genre not only marks a move from textual discourse to discursive practice, but also serves to 'intervene' in such a way as to 'steer' and to 'govern' policy implementation and policy process in particular ways. In order to proceed in this vein, it is again helpful to employ Fairclough's 'textually-oriented discourse analysis'. In this case, Fairclough's understanding of the 'technologization' of discourse is useful.

The Technologization of Discourse

In addition to the 'democratization' of discourse, and also paralleling what Miller and Rose (1993) identify as government at a distance, is Fairclough's (1992) explanation of a trend towards the 'technologization' of discourse. Fairclough defines this tendency in much the same way as Miller and Rose (1993) explain the technologies of intervention and the language of expertise – the "professional specialisms and vocabularies" (p. 82) – evident in modern orders of discourse of, for example, interviewing, teaching, counselling, and advertising (Fairclough, 1992, p. 215). According to Fairclough, these discourse technologies take on "the character of transcontextual techniques, which are seen as resources or toolkits that can be used to pursue a wide variety of strategies in many diverse contexts;" they are "increasingly to be handled in specific institutional locations by designated social agents" and they are "coming to have their own specialist technologists: researchers who look into their efficiency, designers who work out refinements in the light of research and changing institutional requirements, and trainers who pass on the techniques" (p. 215). More specifically, Fairclough's method for 'textually-oriented discourse analysis' offers a means to examine particular texts in terms of the technologization of discourse. He suggests that the 'speaker' or 'author' of the text be taken into consideration: Those who are trained in and employ discourse technologies "tend to be teachers, interviewers, advertisers, and other 'gatekeepers' and power-holders" (p. 216). He also suggests that 'audience' be considered: "Discourse technologies are generally designed to have particular effects upon publics (clients, customers, consumers) who are not trained in them" (p. 216). Moreover, "discourse technologies establish a close connection between knowledge about language and discourse, and power. They are designed and refined on the basis of the anticipated effects" and "they bring about discursive change through conscious design" (p. 216). As such, Fairclough argues that texts must be scrutinized for "even the finest details of linguistic choices in vocabulary, grammar, intonation, organization of dialogue, and so forth" (p. 216).

With the above suggestions for text analysis in mind, a review of school council policy texts of Ontario and Alberta reveals that the documents include discourse technologies typical of a genre which has, as its main concern, the 'education' and training of those stakeholders involved in the governance and decisions of public schools. In Ontario this genre is most evident in the *School Council Handbook* (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1996), *The Road Ahead III: A Report on the Role of School Councils* (Education Improvement Commission, Government of Ontario, 1998b), *The Ontario Parent Council News* (e.g., Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, February, 1996), and *In Touch* (e.g., Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, Fall, 1999), the Ontario Parent Council Newsletter, all of which are produced and distributed by the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training. In Alberta this genre is also revealed across texts, but is especially apparent in the *School Councils Resource Manual* (Alberta Education, 1995) and the *School Councils Handbook* (Alberta Education, 1999).

The discourse technologies of training are reflected in the content, form, and style of these texts. They are geared towards ensuring that school council implementation and processes happen in particular ways, focusing on the importance of 'meaningful involvement'. In terms of content, these documents include specific guidelines for "enabling, implementing and maintaining school councils" (Alberta Education, 1999, p. 12): outlines of the roles and responsibilities of participants, of the functions of councils, and of the establishment and decision-making processes; models of governance and leadership styles; instructions for organizing effective meetings, including sample agendas, guidelines for chairing meetings, recording minutes, and for evaluating meetings and council progress; strategies for establishing rules, setting priorities, promoting discussion and communication, dealing with conflict, enhancing involvement and parent participation; explanations related to finances, council by-laws, law, and legislation; and glossaries and bibliographies of recommended resources (e.g., Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1996; Alberta Education, 1995, 1999).

Discourse technologies are also evident in the style and form of school council texts. For example, and overlapping with Fairclough's (1992) notion of democratization of discourse, these documents are obviously designed to be 'reader friendly' and accessible to the layperson; in addition, they are typical of the genre of training, where instruction is clearly the goal. In all cases, the presentation of these documents is 'slick' and 'professional' – design and appearance are attractive and purposeful; colour, photos and clear graphics are utlilized for appeal and accessibility. Layout features include 'step-by-step' or 'point form', 'question and answer' or 'frequently asked questions' and 'who, what, how, why' formats for the clear and concise presentation of information. Charts, tables, and visual representations, some of which are designed to be used as overhead masters for training purposes, are included. Checklists for monitoring process, forms for evaluating progress, practice exercises, surveys and questionnaires, and space for notes are intended to encourage interaction with the text and participation in school council procedures.

Furthermore, as is the case with original school council legislation in both provinces, some of the 'educational' texts claim that training and instruction is in direct response to public demand. In the words of past Alberta Education Minister Halvar Jonson, for example:

> "Parents, teachers, principals and other education partners have told us they want help in preparing for their changing roles and responsibilities .... To assist with the successful implementation of school councils and school-based decision making ... government will fund regional consortia – groups who will coordinate training opportunities across the province." (Alberta Learning, June 27, 1995)

Likewise in Ontario, the Ministry of Education remains interested in training, and renews its pledge to take "steps to ensure that parents have the guidelines and resources they need to participate in a full and meaningful way on school councils" (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, Fall/Winter, 2000, p. 1). These steps include "revising the existing School Councils Handbook to clarify the roles and responsibilities of all people involved, and to reflect the guidelines as set out in the proposed new regulation," ensuring that "all school councils have the training and resources they need to work effectively," providing "information sessions for school council chairs at all school boards in early 2001," and "continuing to work in partnership with TVOntario to support the school councils website," which makes possible electronic communication among nearly 5,000 school councils (p. 2).

Almost without exception, school council texts employ personal pronouns such as 'your', 'you', and 'we', in tune with the "spirit of collaboration" and "partnership" (Alberta Education, 1995, p. iii) promoted throughout the documents. Although it is clear that the intent of the documents is that they be worked with and upon and that, indeed, they be 'owned' by those participating, it is also clear that these documents are authored, produced, and distributed by higher governing bodies who are, in effect, the 'educators' or 'trainers' of an audience that is assumed to be comprised of 'lay persons' – those in need of a certain kind of 'education' or 'training' – a type of guidance and

instruction which is often in accordance with particular and established rules, conventions, and structures.

In terms of 'governmentality', the 'technologization' of discourse of the school council documents in Ontario and Alberta further aligns the aims and goals of the State with those of the general public. Within a genre of training, through particular discourses and discursive practices, the 'language' of the document authors 'intervenes' so as to bring the objectives of the audience in line with the objectives of the policy-makers. And, conversely, as is reflected in the Ministries' continued desire to meet the needs of the public by disseminating information and providing workshops and training sessions, the intentions of the policy-makers also become attuned to wishes of the audience through the evaluation and, then, the reproduction of new but similar texts. In this way, policy documents, such as those examined above, form a network wherein government values are translated into or are consonant with those of the public (Miller and Rose, 1993, p. 84) and, thus, serve as mechanisms for government at a distance. Not only does their language influence understandings and attitudes, their arrangements and forms, particular to a genre of training, drive processes and govern practices. As Fairclough (1992) argues, text is both a discursive event and an event of social practice. It is through the production and interpretation of text that subjectivity is shaped and that social identity is constructed, and it is through the social categorization of identities that power relations are exercised and that societies are reproduced and are changed (p. 168).

Key Findings

At this juncture, one might ask the important question: "So What?" In writing this paper I set out to discover how particular forms of knowledge are produced and reproduced through texts and how forms such as policy documents potentially become the rationalities of power and of social inequity. My analysis so far has revealed some of the ways in which government at a distance operates through the discourses or technologies of policy texts. However, to this point I have not developed a strong link between the concepts of governmentality and those of power and inequity. Indeed, one might ask whether government at a distance is necessarily a bad thing or, more specifically, whether we are to assume that the aims of the State which, through government at a distance, align and steer public sentiment and practice, are inherently negative. Considering the poststructuralist notions of power and the subject/agent, these questions are appropriate. However, as Fairclough (1992) argues "discourse technologies involve simulation: in particular, the simulation for strategic and instrumental purposes" (p. 216). Moreover, the *simulations* of power symmetry "are widely used techniques on the part of institutional power-holders" (p. 216) and, as Miller and Rose (1993) also remind us, the aligned associations among agents across time and space can be effectively utilized by those who have particular ambitions or objectives (p. 84). With this in mind, I posit the following: In the same way that one cannot assume that the aims and claims of the State are inherently negative, it would be naïve to assume that they should be accepted without question. As outlined at the onset of this paper, my analysis takes a poststructuralist stance and an 'archeological' approach and, in this manner, I view school council policy as a 'critical problematic', challenging the assumptions of such documents with a view to understanding the deeper structures of meaning which underlie policy tactics and strategies (Miller & Rose, 1993; Peters & Marshall, 1996; Scheurich, 1994).

<u>The Policy Problems</u>

On the surface, the policies and the documents for school councils in Ontario and Alberta seem innocent enough. Indeed, their appeal to the values of quality education is difficult to argue with; they are nicely attuned to shared goals. However, my own years of experience as a teacher representative on a school council in Alberta and my own research (Spencer, 1999) has taught me that significant tensions exist between the policy and the practice of school council legislation.

To begin, the policies meant to empower all educational stakeholders can be extremely limited by a larger political and economic context within which school councils must operate (Spencer, 1999). While central bureaucracies have been dismantled and varying degrees of self-governance and autonomy have been achieved through devolution and decentralization, there remains significant central concern and control over the allocation of tax dollars and in monitoring the efficiency and effectiveness of schools (Whitty et al., 1998). Therefore, on the one hand, the need for community participation and local responsiveness, and the importance of decisions being made as close as possible to those they affect seems to be recognized through, for example, school council policies; on the other hand, independence and autonomy are curtailed by significant central controls over funding and accountability. Referred to as a 'loose-tight' coupling by Knight, Lingard, and Porter (1993), this contradiction is at the heart of education reform policies in many Western nations and has become, not surprisingly, the central issue of much debate. In this 'loose-tight' relationship we are able to see the irony of the responsibility/accountability link in the discourses of school council legislation, so aptly illustrated in assertions such as the following: "In Ontario, school councils are *volunteer* organizations *mandated by provincial law* [italics added] and governed by school board policy" (Education Improvement Commission, Government of Ontario, 1998a).

Following Miller and Rose (1993), I argue that intervention, key to government at a distance and the means by which various authorities "shape, normalize and instrumentalize the conduct, thought, decisions and aspirations of others in order to achieve the objectives they consider desirable" (p. 82), is achieved in the alignment of aims and goals apparent in the democratization of the discourses of school council texts. Language, operating as a powerful discursive technology of governmentality, is deployed by 'experts', whose populist calls to work together towards the realization of common goals appeal to the desires of the public who, in turn, also assume 'expert' positions. However, within this context, what seems to be symmetry of authority or power may only be a semblance of balance, a simulation (Fairclough, 1992). Under such circumstances, within this type of power/knowledge dynamic, politicians and their policy-makers are subtly able to 'take up' and maintain positions of dominance. Ministry officials, the producers of a particular kind of knowledge or truth that is especially compelling and seductive, are the subjects within a complex power relationship who are most adept at operationalizing discursive mechanisms and technologies – in this case political rhetoric. As such, they are able to maintain the 'upper hand' and to exercise power by privileging the discourses of a particular political persuasion or ideology. Here we can see, for example, how the discourse of accountability of school council policies and the discourse of accountability of a larger political and economic sphere can be one in the same.

In addition, a consideration of the power networks of governmentality and the subject relationships within such dynamics does not end here. Attention to the notion of the subject, specifically the self-reflective and self-regulating citizen, becomes particularly illuminating in this context. Within the discursive formations of governmentality, the autonomous subject/citizen of the advanced liberal democracies Miller and Rose (1993) and Rose (1996) refer to, becomes, paradoxically, both the 'object' and the 'agent' of the discourses of accountability. Well-disciplined in the practices of the liberal, democratic institutions of the State and the public school, the subject/citizen is the individual for whom the political rhetoric and populist pleas are especially resonant. Schooled in the "ethical work" of the "self on the self" (Hunter, 1996, p. 158), the subject/citizen – reflective, responsible and, moreover, morally self-concerned – is more than willing to 'take up' a particular subject position in the desire to rise to the challenge of the political 'experts' who call for partnership and solidarity in the name of a bright future for public education. Furthermore, the subject/citizen is self-guided and self-directed (Popkewitz, 1998) and, as such, is particularly interested in exercising the right of choice and in assuming the responsibility inherent in the role of the autonomous citizen of liberal, democratic societies. This subject position becomes particularly appealing when citizenship is promised through new forms of democratization, at the

local level, closest to the subject/citizen for whom self-regulation and self-control are especially valued.

As Miller and Rose (1993) and Popkewitz (1999) argue, it is through the rhetoric of populism that the norms and values of the responsible, self-regulating subject/citizen become seemingly aligned and in common with the desires of the State. The subject/citizen, therefore, emerges as an ally of political success and "not an obstacle to be controlled and disciplined" (Miller & Rose, p. 100). In sync with political objectives, and through the loose and indirect mechanisms of government at a distance, in this case the particularly persuasive language of school council texts – the rhetorical discourses of democratization and of responsibility and accountability – the subject/citizen is seduced and becomes an 'agent', 'taking up' dominant political discourses as if they where her or his own. In this way, political programmes and agendas are advanced.

It is not surprising, considering the above arguments, that policies for decentralization, such as those for school councils are often accepted without question and, in some cases, welcomed with enthusiasm. Furthermore, as discussed earlier, the democratized forms of school council documents, particularly evident in 'training' genres, ensure that through such texts, knowledge is reproduced and practice is encouraged; since discourses of accountability dominate these texts, it becomes crucial to ask *what kind* of knowledge and *what sort* of practice. Here, I return to my concern with the potential of dominant discourses to be widely accepted and taken for granted – the rationalities of power and, moreover, of social inequity. As many critics (e.g., Ball, 1994; Barlow & Robertson, 1994; Kachur, 1999; Knight et al., 1993, Marginson, 1993) have asserted, the discourses of accountability for 'quality' education that have motivated recent reform initiatives have had more to do with the capitalist ideals of a free market economy or with the liberal democratic ideals of individualism and competition than they have had to do with ideals of social justice. For example, the imperative of being competitive within a global economy is reflected in the educational policies of Western nations which have, as their chief concern, to ensure that students are prepared to enter the workforce, to contribute to the economy and, in turn, to advance the economic status of the country. As well, with economic concerns as primary, fiscal consciousness for social policy involves program and budget cuts and reallocations (Marginson, 1993). These preoccupations have foregrounded interests in accountability for efficiency and effectiveness in public schools. Consequently, concerns of social equity have been backgrounded in recent education reform policy (Apple, 1993; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993; Barlow & Robertson, 1994).

Conclusion

A Foucauldian poststructuralist approach to education policy analysis offers a 'micro' look into the details – the specifics of the organization, technologies, rationalities – of institutions, such as the State and the school, and their policies. Moreover, when used in conjunction with a method such as Fairclough's (1992) 'textually-oriented discourse analysis', this approach is particularly useful in examining how power operates through policies, themselves sophisticated institutional mechanisms of 'knowledges' (Marshall, 1990). As illustrated in the key findings of this study, the documents related to school council policies reveal how governmentality, via 'government at a distance', can operate through the discourses and discursive practices of text to privilege discourses of, for example, accountability.

However, as Fairclough (1992) cautions, although such analysis can offer important insights into how texts function to construct and reproduce social knowledge and practice, this type of work is only a beginning. It allows us to identify tendencies such as 'democratization' or 'technologization' but, in highlighting abstractions in this way, we also run the risk of creating the impression that discourses and discourse practices are stable and fixed. This is not the case. Orders of discourse are highly heterogeneous and contradictory:

> We must therefore try to make sense of the tendencies as they interact and cut across each other. In doing so, we need to allow for possible variations in the effects of the tendencies upon

> different local orders of discourse, in the degree to which they are accepted or resisted, and so forth. (Fairclough, 1992, p. 219)

In addition, these tendencies "are caught up in processes of struggle in and over discourse practices in which they can be variously invested" and, so, as well as the potential for "appropriating them and 'turning them around', there is also the possibility of resisting and rejecting them, or accommodating and marginalizing them" (p. 222). Those involved on school councils, the 'subjects' described above, are not one-dimensional entities able to assume only one position at a time; rather, they are complex, able to move among a myriad of often contradictory positions. Although practiced and disciplined as self-regulating, self-reflective subject/citizens, these individuals may assert agency by 'taking up' or negotiating multiple and sometimes conflicting subject-positions. In this way, school council participants, for example, have the means to resist disagreeable or adverse circumstances and the ability to establish a more desirable position within the power dynamics of governmentality.

Therefore, in addition to text analysis, and equally crucial to understanding how texts operate, is the necessity of talking to those who actually interact with the documents in question within local contexts. In an inquiry such as this one, the appropriate next step, then, would be to interview school council participants. This would further an understanding of the complexity of school council texts and procedures. Through discovering not only what gets 'taken up' and accepted or what becomes disregarded or resisted in the practices of dominant discursive forms, but also, and perhaps more interesting, by determining *who* participates and *why*, the types of knowledge and the kinds of subject that are reproduced in the service of school council policy can be further ascertained. In addition, although the abstractions of a textually-oriented discourse analysis are important to consider, it is also essential to acknowledge that discursive practices have material consequences for those involved. This assertion becomes particularly important in a study of social contexts, such as this one, wherein the relationships and the arrangements of school governance are steered by discourses of accountability rather than by discourses related to concerns of equity and social justice.

As a starting place, however, both the approach to analysis advocated in this paper and the resulting study findings offer an initial opportunity to question and, then, perhaps to begin to change what might be justified in the name of policy for education *reform* (Gore, 1998). Work of this sort offers the first step in initiating policy *transformation*, which recognizes issues of equity and social justice as fundamental. It allows us, in Foucault's (1982) words, to "refuse what we are" (p. 216).

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